Petroglyph

National Monument
National Park Service
City of Albuquerque
State of New Mexico

P448/G/991

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A SPECIAL PLACE . . .

Long before Albuquerque spread its lights across the Rio Grande Valley, prehistoric people lived here. Today we find their tools, or the scattered ruins of their houses, and sometimes places where they carved petroglyphs into the rocks. The petroglyphs allow us to get close to those distant people. Sometimes the rock art seems like voices whispering to us from centuries ago.

The black, volcanic cliffs that stand like a wall on Albuquerque's West Side became a vast outdoor art gallery, or perhaps a holy place. Sometimes for religion, sometimes for a record, the people chipped their ideas and visions into the volcanic boulders. A thousand years or more of a culture's art is on that escarpment, still precious to today's Pueblo Indians, descendants of those who carved into the rocks.

In the 1500s Spaniards came into the Rio Grande Valley, encountering the Pueblo Indians who still carved on the cliffs as had their ancestors. Eventually Spanish culture filled the valley, and left its marks on the valley walls.

Today those cliffs look down on a city that almost fills the valley, hosting visitors from around the nation and world. But the rocks remember.

. . . BECOMES A PARK

The people of Albuquerque care about the open spaces and wide vistas of the city's West Mesa. When vandals destroyed petroglyphs and development threatened the escarpment itself, citizens worked to establish Indian Petroglyph State Park, Volcano City Park, and finally, Petroglyph National Monument. The new monument, created in June of 1990, includes the five extinct volcanoes along Albuquerque's western horizon and the entire 17-mile-long dark cliff below, the great rock art gallery.

Starting a new park is not easy, especially at the edge of a growing city. In most national parks, the federal government pays the bills. But at Petroglyph National Monument, the State of New Mexico and the City of Albuquerque are also buying land. Rangers from the National Park Service and Albuquerque's Open Space Division will work side by side to protect the park and help visitors, once the land is purchased.

The fight to save the petroglyphs continues. If Albuquerque overflows onto the West Mesa, New Mexico's newest national park will find itself surrounded by New Mexico's largest city. Can the petroglyphs, and the landscape in which they were created, survive this change?

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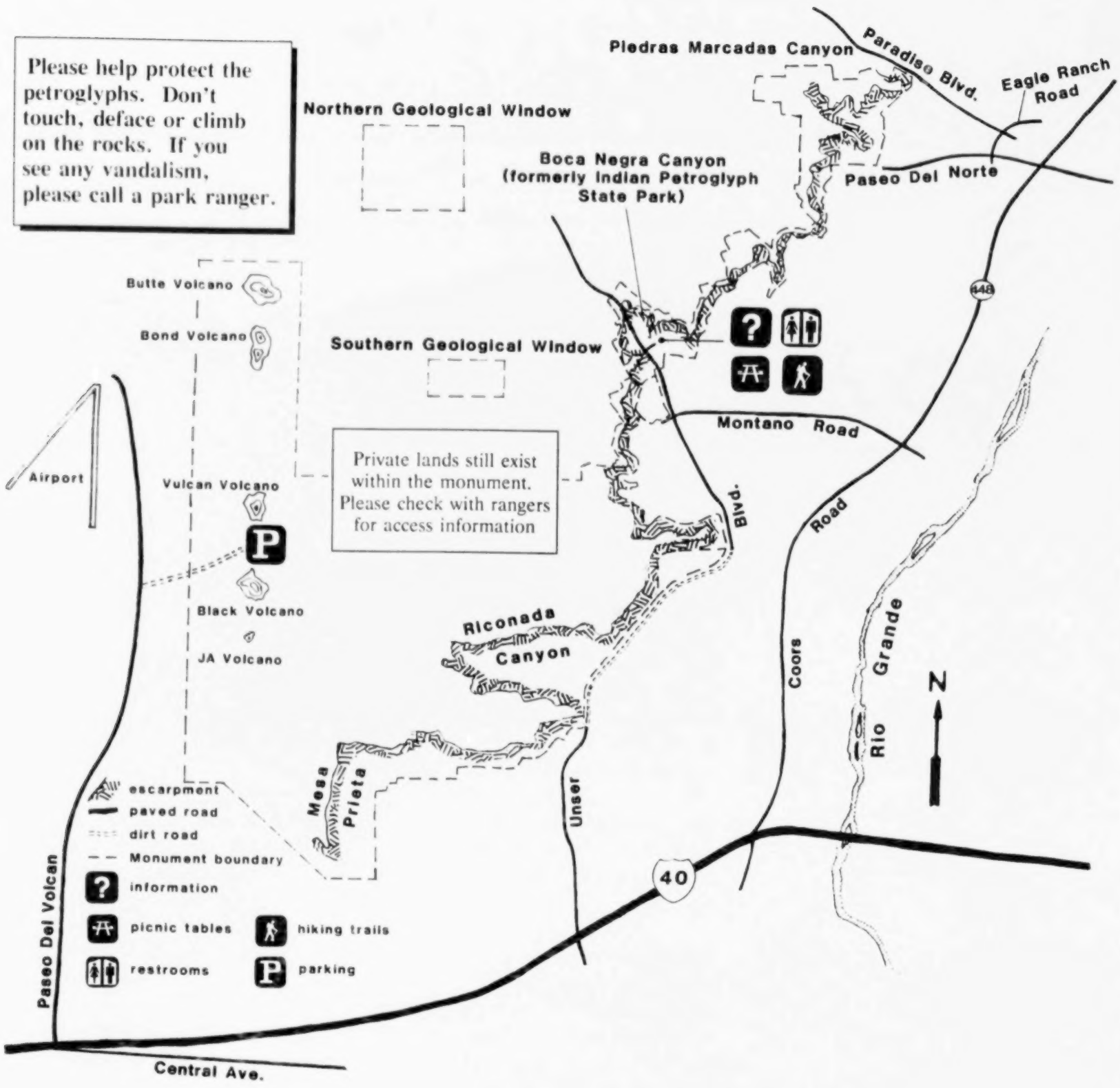

EXPLORING THE PETROGLYPHS

What was once Indian Petroglyph State Park, just north of Montano Road at 6900 Unser Boulevard NW (Unser is sometimes called Atrisco Drive in this section), is now part of the much larger national monument. It is open from 8 to 5 in the winter and 9 to 6 in the summer. There are trails that lead to rock art, and picnic tables beneath the black escarpment.

As land for the national monument is bought and developed, rangers will open up more areas. For more information on ranger-led walks, call the National Park Service.

As the park develops, there will be public meetings announced in the press, and plans put out for review. The park belongs to the people of the United States, and we need your comments and participation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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